

COMET CAPERS



Number 3

March 1979

© 1979 United For Our Expanded Space Programs

ELECTION FEVER

Having announced only recently the cancellation of the last attempt at elections, the reader may rightly wonder at this announcement of next year's elections for President and the various General Secretaries. In part, this renewed effort at formality is the result of habit. Having struggled so conscientiously to effect this formality in the past, the Board of Governors feel "itchy" if there isn't some project with the goal of elections or a charter continually underway. More importantly, our country is gearing for the 1980 elections and our position as the vanguard of the Space Revolution requires that we be sensitive to internal politics as well as those of the national arena. Thus, the political fevers rising across the land affect us, intended or otherwise. Somewhat related to this reason, but important enough(as the most important consideration)to warrant separate mention, is the necessity for the organization's history, purposes, projects, and structure to have a firmer foundation than one provided by operation on tradition only. At minimum, this means that the voting membership must "validate" or "sanctify" (depending on how seriously one views the process) the work and leadership of U.F.O.E.S.P. regularly. Given that the group formed in October 1974, the President is the chief executive with the greatest responsibility for policies and "running" the organization, that six years (the traditional term for the Presidency) is getting to be a long time since the initial sanctification, and the membership's distribution in spacetime requires ample opportunity for contact and communication, the Board feels the choice is preordained that we vote next year on our leaders and, at least through them, our future actions or course.

Our publications will carry future notices and reminders on the elections but the Board can provide some detail now. This issue of Comet Capers has on page 3 an Application For Candidacy for the General Secretary and President offices. Any active or lifetime member who would like to seek and serve for any of the listed offices must return the AFC by September 1, 1980. All potential candidates should note the requirements for office and should fill out the AFC completely. Responsibility for eligibility is the responsibility of not only the Board of Governors (operating and monitoring the elections) but also, more importantly, that of the candidate (making sure he or she meets all the election requirements.) Next issue we hope to begin publishing news and statements concerning candidates. Ballots will be distributed by September 11 or the second Monday of the month, whichever is earliest. Ballots must be returned by October 29 or the last Monday of the month, whichever is latest. The results will be announced in a special publication for all members as soon as they are tabulated and certified, in no case more than 22 days after the deadline for returned ballots.

The next twelve months will be explosive for the Space Revolution. By October 29, 1980 so much history, achievement, and opportunity will be ours that we should be fully able to continue with whatever leadership and policies emerge from these elections without any further formality for another six years, if need be. We are activists to the core, however enthralled with our simulators, and the final judgement of U.F.O.E.S.P. is ACTION, not regulations.

HARRISON "JACK" SCHMITT FOR U.S. PRESIDENT IN '80

As frequently stated in these and other pages, spacers and all other futurian forces are running a great race with annihilation. The Space Revolution represents the only realistic alternative to World War III in that all other programs either feed the flames of conflict or insufficiently douse them. Sadly, as noted nearly as often as discussion of the Great Race, the supporters and resources of World War III vastly outnumber those of the progressive, futurian movement. Because of the deepening commitments to the planetary conflict at home and abroad, the strife escalates so rapidly that any serious observer can readily conclude that the race could well be lost before it was technically over. Furthermore, such an observer would reach the corollary understanding straightaway that the race does not have a long time left to the finish line, let alone that (possible) critical moment when some contenders give out and are left far behind.

Nuclear war is such an obvious example of the human race with annihilation that people frequently ignore the threats to civilization which arise from our industrialization, exponential use of energy and materials, breeding, increasing propensity for totalitarian regimes and similar "problems of the day." All these largely self-imposed threats to our existence revolve around one simple consideration, or more properly, lack thereof: the future. Because we largely ignore the future, yet simultaneously insist on exploiting our environments to the limits and beyond, we speed ever more quickly to Collapse of (Human) Civilization.

This grim picture brightens when we reflect that History records many seemingly hopeless races with miracle finishes: the American Revolution, Magellan's circumnavigation of the earth, the Bolshevik seizure of power, the launch of Sputnik I. Clearly, though the futurian forces at this moment do not match those of the Anti-Futurian League, there is a chance, there is a hope that we can pull the irons out of the fire and toss them to the stars before we lose the match to Annihilation. The hard question that rattles in our throats is what spectacular move to make to beat our opponent.

Dropping all metaphors, the spectacular move spacers and their futurian allies must make is the election of a futurian candidate as President in 1980. For various, relatively obvious, reasons 1984 is too late and, no doubt, too little.

Electing a suitable futurian as President next year is not sufficient in itself to stop the slide to Collapse of the future. Yet it is the only adequately powerful office that spacers have any hope of affecting. Exercising power in Congress means "handling" 535 Congresspeople and their staffs of thousands. The Governors of even the spaciest states, such as Texas or Florida or California, have essentially no influence or input on the national space programs. Having futurian leaders running NASA itself would be futile because even the highest NASA official is simply a flunky of the President's. The President of the U.S. is the single most powerful individual in America (the world!) whose chief responsibility is making national decisions, policies, and priorities. His word or writ is not law. But he has the greatest potential to get anything imaginable done if has a mind to do so.

Having narrowed the office and time to next year for the Top Job, we are halfway through the problem. The last two questions concern the best candidate (not necessarily a willing one) for the job and the (best)(only) way to get him elected. The current (projected) pool of presidential candidates includes Ronald Reagan (announces in September), Jimmy Carter (all but announced), Teddy Kennedy (disavowing all intentions but the subject of quite a draft-Kennedy effort), Jerry Brown (still weighing prospects but expected by Fall to announce), Philip Crane (first to announce his candidacy), George Bush (most recent to announce), John Connolly (first heavy to announce and conceded the lead in his party now), Robert Dole (announced just before Bush and an admitted darkhorse), Gerald Ford (still checking the wind), and Howard Baker (another recent unequivocal candidate for President). To discuss each one's qualifications is a wasteful task because only one, Jerry Brown, has any claim to futurian sentiments and he is: a)anathema to the Democratic Party organization; b)second by far to Kennedy, the obvious choice if Carter falls; c)too ambitious; and d)too clever for his own good. We can thus conclude that the contenders so far in the arena and the ones expected by next summer's political conventions are a Dead End.

As the vanguard of the Space Revolution, U.F.O.E.S.P. has watched assiduously many spacer leaders in and out of public life. Seeing the complete inadequacy or improbability of the likely contenders, the Board of Governors conducted an in-depth and rapid (or "commando") survey of these leaders and discovered to its marvelous surprise that one person stood out as a towering possibility of futurian power: Senator Harrison Schmitt of New Mexico, Junior Republican who won office in 1976 by beating Joseph Montoya (a long-time Democrat who served on the Senate Watergate Committee and lost largely in part because of his homestate shady dealings) handily.

The prime qualifications for President of Jack Schmitt are 1) his demonstration of leadership, courage, and vision as an astronaut who became the first scientist (and last person) on Luna; 2) his non-association with the old Republican power brokers and policies of Reagan, Ford, Connolly, et. al.; 3) his youth coupled with his broad and deep experience as astronaut, college professor, geologist, and Senator; 4) his sponsorship of legislation which calls for a 30-year approach to the space and the future (not simply supporting all the major projects of which spacers talk lovingly but also timetables for their realization); 5) his strong family background; 6) his enormous reservoir of support in the major space states: Texas (26 electoral votes), California (45), Florida (17), and with the right running mate, Illinois (26), Indiana (13), Michigan (21), or New York (41); 7) as a former astronaut it would be easy to build name-recognition, generate charisma, and capitalize on the enormous prestige and national-hero sentiment the last person on the moon intrinsically carries; 8) his coming from New Mexico strengthens the natural Republican hold on the West and appeals to its extensive base in the South; and 9) his doctorate in geology gives him insight into the energy-resource crisis of the last quarter of this century while his lunar experience provides incomparable perspective on the human implications of current planetary relations. Naturally these points only outline the campaign and prospects for Schmitt; an actual presidential effort for nomination or election involves thousands of details and many more considerations. But the broad aspects of such a fight for office are clear: find a candidate who appeals to broad sections of the nation (geographically, charismatically, and occupationally); who represents a clean break with the stale methods of the past; who

has deep enough experience and vigorous age both to stick with the long, hard work of campaigns and office and to maintain poise, inspiration, and steady plans for national improvement and security; and who matches all the strongest Democratic rivals point for point far better than his Republican competitors.

The task of U.F.O.E.S.P. at this unprecedented juncture in American political history is to draft the futurian Schmitt for national salvation. In the next 90 to 120 days we must conduct the most thorough survey and collection of futurian forces for this candidate all across the nation if we are to have any chance of pulling off this coup. The country needs Schmitt so we must convince him to run at all costs. This necessity means that we must in some sense present him with a fait accompli. Our man very well may have presidential aspirations; but we must let that issue rest until the evidence for grass-roots support is readily perceived and concretely equipped with resources (money, labor, publicity, etc.) to make the effort credible and quickly implementable. The first line of support is, naturally, the readers of this publication and the members of U.F.O.E.S.P. more generally. Soon a commitment sheet will begin circulation amongst the membership and in futurian circles at large. Do not hesitate or wait for this circular if you possibly can make some (paper) commitment now to Schmitt. This is no joke. This is the fantastic opportunity to make our cosmic ideas come true. The two decades of the Space Revolution have created a broad and unappreciatedly powerful constituency for space. If we present our man in 90 days or even less with tens of thousands of dollars of pledges, thousands of hours of commitments of (committee) labor, countless offers of transportation, lodging, food, speaking opportunities, and much more of readiness to go to the mat for his program and aspirations, we can not only tip the personal balance of decision for Schmitt but immediately spark intense, national debate over space and the future.

Finally, again, it comes to the facts that the country needs his skills and time has almost run out for a bold, comprehensive, constructive vision and program for the future which neither seeks unhealthy, unattainable separation from world problems nor submits to archaic, suicidal involvement with the militaristically adventurous wretched of the earth. ** jgm